

3rd Brigade's BSB 'supports' more than its own in Iraq

Story and Photo by
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KIRKUK, Iraq – She held back tears explaining why this day meant so much to the more than 2,000 orphans in the Shorish and Chamchamal – Kalar quarters of Kirkuk.

“Sadaam Hussein massacred their parents and destroyed their villages,” said Surod, a local national aid worker. “Silly little things that are meaningless to you, like a pencil, mean the world to them,” she said. “No one gives them anything.”

Until now.
Bud's Organization for Children's Rights received more than 50 boxes of school supplies, toys, stuffed animals and soccer balls to be distributed to more than 2,000 orphans in and around Kirkuk from the 325th Brigade Support Battalion at Forward Operating Base Warrior, here, Nov. 6.

Mr. Rebwar S. Muhamed, the Bud's founder, teaches Arabic, history and geology to 12-year-olds in a local primary school, but he devotes the majority of his time to his children's rights organization.

Perhaps among his several stories of children “doing without,” the most compelling was that of two students he noticed who had never attended school on the same day.

“I knew these two children from the same family that attended my class,” said Muhamed, through an interpreter. “I would see one student one day and the other student the next. I learned the reason that



Battalion Chaplain (Capt.) Martin Cho, 325th Brigade Support Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, helps unload more than 50 boxes of school supplies, toys, stuffed animals and soccer balls to be distributed to more than 2,000 orphans in and around Kirkuk, Iraq.

they didn't attend school together was because they were sharing a pair of shoes,” he said.

“War in Iraq has created a very big so-

cial problem of widows and orphans,” he continued. “I [empathize] with the children because we suffered during our childhood just as they are suffering. They are the fu-

ture of this country, and they need our help.”

According to Muhamed, the orphans are in need of everything from health

care, food and clothing, to shelter and other basic social services. Although grateful for this delivery of items, he is anxious to get coalition force assistance on many fronts.

The American Soldier spearheading the effort to assist is Chaplain (Capt.) Martin Cho, battalion chaplain, 3rd Brigade Support Battalion, 25th Infantry Division. Cho's motivation is both spiritual and personal.

“First, I help because the Bible says help widows and orphans; it's that simple,” said Cho. “Also, I'm Korean. A lot of American [service members] supported Korean orphans over the years.

“Some of those orphans who received help became American and Korean religious, business and political leaders,” he said. “My prayer is to do what I can to give these Iraqi orphans the same support.”

According to Cho, the assistance project is in its infancy. The first challenge is to ensure that donations actually end up in the hands of the orphans.

“This is our third contact with the organization,” said Cho. “When you aren't handing out assistance directly, but relying on them to do it, you need confirmation that it is actually getting to the orphans. So, they will send us photos,” he explained.

“They need so much, and we cannot do it all, but we can do something. Bud's has opened its heart to us, and now we can help connect [the organization] with powerful people to continue to support these children and this organization.”